FUN WORD ORDER COURT

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Episode 1: "POOPICIDE"

CAST

JUDGE J.D. WITTY SCRAMBLER RAMBLER[delete RAMBLER] —59 years old, dignified, robed, unbothered by his regularly playfully scrambling the order of words to make the trials more interesting. He thinks everyone else orders words incorrectly.

BAILIFF TORRES — Tries his best, but often fails

PROSECUTOR LINDA SHARP — Precise, intense, wears sexy black frame glasses, slowly losing her mind decoding that judges crucial statements.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY BOB FUMBLER — Underpaid, overworked, unprepared, surprisingly resourceful, witty =maybe a volunteer attorney, though that work is funny and contradicts the notion of a top professional work.

DEFENDANT GLORIA PICKENS[or DROPPER, or UNCONSCIENTIOUS or GIVESNOTASHIT — 50s, indignant [indignant, how?] dog owner= I would say selfish, uncaring, unprincipled, devious

WITNESS #1: CARLOS VEGA — Neighbor who reported the incident

WITNESS #2: DETECTIVE MILLS — Presents the video evidence

SETTING: A courtroom. Everything looks normal. That is the first mistake.

ACT ONE

The Bailiff stands at attention. The gallery is packed. A large TV monitor sits near the witness stand. GLORIA PICKENS sits at the defense table, arms crossed, next to BOB FUMBLE, who is still reading the case file.

BAILIFF TORRES

All rise! Judge J.D. Scrambler Rambler presiding. Be seated —

(quietly, to himself)

— I think.[WHAT DOES I THINK mean?

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER enters, robes flowing, expression serene. He sits. He arranges his papers. He looks up.

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

Order this court I call to.

Silence. Everyone looks at each other.

BAILIFF TORRES

(whispering to the court reporter)

He called the court to order.

COURT REPORTER

That's what I put.

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

The People versus Pickens, Gloria. Dog. Sidewalk. The matter before us is.

PROSECUTOR SHARP

(standing, crisp)

That's correct, Your Honor. The People charge Ms. Pickens with failure to remove canine waste from a public sidewalk, in violation of City Code 1-2-3, section: ABC,

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

Sit, Ms. Sharp. The time for that later will come.

Sharp sits. She writes something on her notepad. We see it reads: "WHAT?"

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

Mr. Fumble. Client your, how does plead she?

BOB FUMBLE

(standing slowly)

Your Honor, my client pleads...

(to Gloria, whispering)

— what are we pleading?

GLORIA

(hissing)

Not guilty! We discussed this!

BOB FUMBLE

Not guilty, Your Honor.

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

Noted it is. Proceed, Ms. Sharp. The case your, present.

ACT TWO

PROSECUTOR SHARP

The People call Mr. Carlos Vega to the stand.

CARLOS VEGA, 40s, nervous, takes the stand. He is sworn in.

SHARP

Mr. Vega, were you present on the morning of October 3rd, on the corner of Elm and 5th?

CARLOS VEGA

Yes, I was walking to work and I saw—

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

The witness will directly answer more.

Pause.

CARLOS VEGA

I'm sorry — what?

BAILIFF TORRES

(leaning over)

I think he wants more detail.

CARLOS VEGA

Oh. Right. I saw the defendant walking her dog — a large dog, a brown one — and after the dog did his business on the sidewalk, she just... walked away. Didn't pick it up. Didn't even look back.

SHARP

And what did you do?

CARLOS VEGA

I said, "Excuse me, ma'am, aren't you going to—"

GLORIA

(from the defense table)

Mind your own business is what I told him!

BOB FUMBLE

Gloria—

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

(sternly)

The defendant will herself restrain.

Gloria crosses her arms tighter.

SHARP

No further questions.

BOB FUMBLE

(standing)

Mr. Vega. You say you saw my client walk away. But isn't it possible — isn't it at least conceivable — that she was going to her bag to retrieve a waste bag and simply... hadn't gotten there yet?

CARLOS VEGA

She was half a block away.

BOB FUMBLE

It's a big bag.

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

The jury this point will NOTE.

The jury nods uncertainly.

ACT THREE

SHARP

The People call Detective Mills.

DETECTIVE MILLS, 50s, humorless, takes the stand carrying a remote control.

SHARP

Detective, did you review surveillance footage from the corner of Elm and 5th on October 3rd?

DETECTIVE MILLS

I did. The city installed a camera at that intersection last year. I pulled the footage and enhanced the relevant section.

SHARP

Please show the court Exhibit A.

The monitor flickers on. The footage shows Gloria walking a massive dog. The dog stops. The dog does his business. Gloria looks around — sees no one — and walks briskly away.

The gallery murmurs.

GLORIA

(standing)

I was coming back!

BOB FUMBLE

Gloria, please—

GLORIA

The camera doesn't show me coming back because I came back AFTER the camera angle—

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

(firmly, raising his gavel)

Order! Silence will there be, or cleared the court I will have!

Silence. Everyone decodes. Then sits.

BOB FUMBLE

(to Mills)

Detective, how long is the full footage?

DETECTIVE MILLS

Six hours.

BOB FUMBLE

And did you watch all six hours?

DETECTIVE MILLS

...No.

BOB FUMBLE

(triumphant)

So my client could have returned!

DETECTIVE MILLS

In six hours, yes. Technically.

BOB FUMBLE

No further questions.

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

Impressive, Mr. Fumble. Occasionally.

Fumble sits down beaming. Then stops. Then looks unsure if that was a compliment.

ACT FOUR — CLOSING ARGUMENTS

SHARP

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. The video is clear. The sidewalk was violated. The dog was large. The evidence is overwhelming. Find her guilty.

She sits.

BOB FUMBLE

Ladies and gentlemen. Yes, there is a video. Yes, there is a dog. Yes, there is a sidewalk. But is there justice? Is there proof beyond reasonable doubt that my client — a taxpayer, a neighbor, a dog lover — did not intend to return? You cannot convict an intention. You can only convict an action. And the action of returning... was never ruled out.

He sits. He looks surprised at himself.

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

The jury deliberate now will. Return when ready they are.

The jury files out. The gallery waits.

Three minutes later, the jury files back in.

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

Fast that was.

JURY FOREPERSON

We had one question, Your Honor.

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

Ask proceed.

JURY FOREPERSON

...What?

BAILIFF TORRES

(sighing)

Please proceed with your question.

JURY FOREPERSON

Oh. The question is: does intent matter in a strict liability offense?

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

Strict liability offenses, intent in them, does not matter. Guilty or not, the act itself is what counts only.

Long pause while the jury decodes.

JURY FOREPERSON

So... intent doesn't matter.

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

Correctly you have understood.

The jury files back out. Two minutes later, they return.

JURY FOREPERSON

We find the defendant... guilty.

GLORIA gasps.

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

Ms. Pickens, the court has you found guilty. Sentenced you are to community service, hours forty, and a fine of two hundred dollars. Also, a bag, waste, carry you must, at all times, henceforth.

Gloria stands, outraged.

GLORIA

This is an outrage! I want to appeal! I didn't understand half of what you said!

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

(calmly)

Understood you enough.

He bangs his gavel.

JUDGE SCRAMBLER RAMBLER

Adjourned is court.

He rises. Everyone rises — three seconds late, still decoding.

BAILIFF TORRES watches the Judge exit, then turns to the court reporter.

BAILIFF TORRES

Good ruling that was, I think.

COURT REPORTER

(typing)

Don't you start.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE 1

Next episode: "The Case of the Loud Parrot" — in which a defendant claims his parrot learned to scramble its words from watching courtroom television, and the parrot is called as a witness.

CIPHER COURT — where justice is served, eventually, once you figure out what was said.